



Directorate of  
Intelligence

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# Afghanistan Situation Report

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8 February 1983

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NESAM 83-10031CY

8 February 1983

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## AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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Recent articles and lectures could be preparing the Soviet public for a prolonged and costly involvement in Afghanistan.

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Pakistan's proposal to move 200,000 unregistered Afghan refugees from the North-West Frontier Province to camps in Punjab is a measure of the increasing strain on the national government to care for the large Afghan refugee population, estimated at more than 2 million.

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This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near East/South Asia and the Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments on the issues raised in the publication should be directed to [redacted]

For more information about the study, please contact the study team at 1-800-258-4263 or visit [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).

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Afghan Refugee Resettlement in the Punjab



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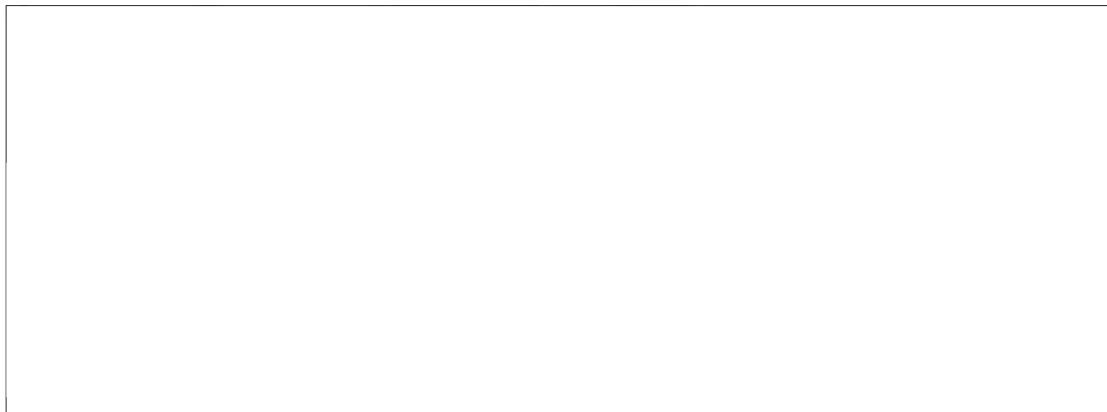
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NEW CANDOR IN SOVIET DOMESTIC TREATMENT OF WAR

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Komsomolskaya Pravda acknowledged Saturday that three more Soviet soldiers were killed in Afghanistan. Red Star carried an article the following day comparing the Afghan insurgents to Nazis, claiming they have killed thousands of Afghans in their efforts to overthrow the regime in Kabul.

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Last week, Soviet lecturers in Moscow were unusually frank in acknowledging the blunders of the Afghan Communists during the eras of both Taraki and Amin. They admitted that the "godless Communist" Babrak Karmal faced an uphill struggle in attracting support for his government's much more pragmatic policies in a land where the economic level and class consciousness of the people were low. Finally, the lecturers asserted that with the US sending increasing amounts of aid to the resistance and improving its military position in the region, Soviet national interests required that the USSR continue to do its internationalist duty in Afghanistan.

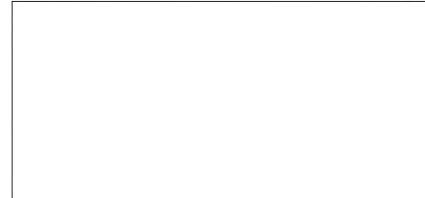
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Comment: The Soviets have previously admitted only two other fatalities in Afghanistan, and only a dozen articles over the last three years have acknowledged the problems the Soviets face there or indirectly hinted at Soviet participation in combat. Most of these--such as those that appeared in Red Star in December--were probably timed to counter Western press attention to Afghanistan around the anniversary of the invasion.

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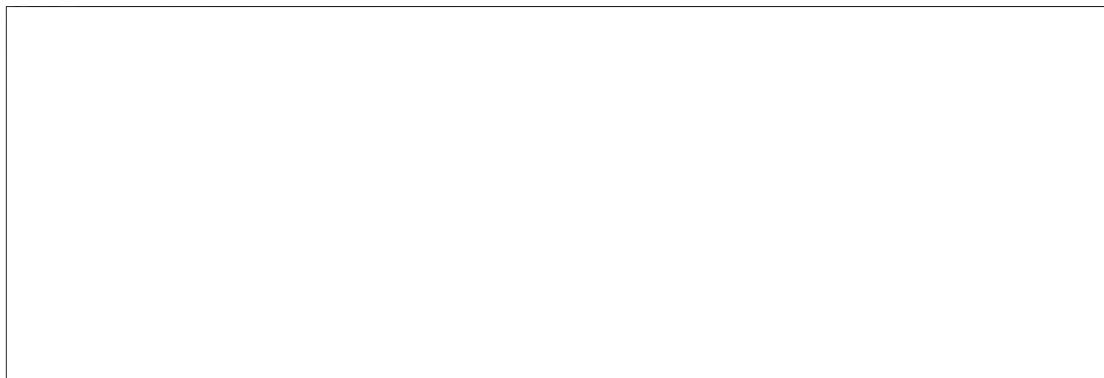




The two new articles, which came soon after a recent conference of propagandists in Moscow, suggest that the more open media handling of Soviet internal affairs will also apply to the USSR's treatment of its Afghan problem. The comparison of Afghan insurgents to Nazis and the invocation of a threat to Soviet security interests are themes intended to appeal to Soviet patriotism. The articles and lectures could be intended to undercut domestic griping about the high costs of the war or prepare the public for a prolonged if not intensified, involvement in Afghanistan. [redacted]

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IN BRIEF



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-- Press reports state that Afghan Minister of Defense Lt. General Abdul Qader arrived in Moscow on 4 February... Qader has met with Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov and probably talked about Soviet aid and perhaps the Cordovez mission... [redacted]

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PERSPECTIVE

PAKISTAN: IMPLICATIONS OF AFGHAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN PUNJAB



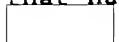
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Pakistan has proposed to move 200,000 unregistered Afghan refugees from the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) to camps in Punjab in order to relieve overcrowding and political and economic pressures in the NWFP. The proposal is a measure of the increasing strain on the national government to care for the large Afghan refugee population. Punjabi officials have taken a strong stand on accepting no more than 200,000 refugees, only a tenth of the number estimated officially to be in the NWFP. [redacted]

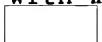
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We believe that the prospect of permanently integrating several million Afghans into a society that has already absorbed huge refugee flows, first at the time of partition from India in 1947 and again after the separation of the eastern wing (Bangladesh) in 1971, could excite Punjabi fears of inundation by still another wave of outsiders in areas that have heretofore been little concerned with the Afghan troubles.



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The US Embassy speculates that Pakistan is fast approaching the saturation point for the total number of refugees that the country can absorb without tearing its already fragile political, social, and economic fabric. Islamabad is gambling that moving the predominantly Pushtun Afghan refugees out of traditional Pushtun areas in the NWFP can be accomplished peacefully and that resettlement in Punjab will proceed with minimum damage to the province's social and economic well-being.



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Although most refugees still believe that they will eventually return home and Pakistani officials frequently reiterate this sentiment, we do not believe that repatriation is likely in the near future given the present state of war and politics in Afghanistan. The move to Punjab will reinforce perceptions among all Pakistanis that the bulk of the refugees will not return to Afghanistan, according to a US Embassy analysis. [redacted]

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Resettlement Plans

Approximately 6,000 refugees were transferred from the NWFP to Punjab between 15 December and 12 January, according to a US Embassy report. According to the Pakistani press, a total of 40,000 refugees are to be moved by mid-April. Elaborate planning has been completed for resettlement, camp administrators have been appointed, the campsite prepared, and coordination with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees officials worked out. [redacted]

25X1 According to US Embassy reporting, considerable political and social sensitivities were involved in the decision by the national and provincial government to move refugees for the first time from the NWFP to a camp in a nonborder province. The location of the camp, in the relatively remote northwest corner of Punjab was chosen to minimize refugee interaction with Punjabis and to limit their impact on the province's economy. [redacted]

25X1 The Punjab government plans to concentrate the refugees in two adjacent camps of 100,000 residents each. The first site, called Islamnagar, was opposed by UN, government of Pakistan, and NWFP officials who charged that it was too hilly and excessively hot and lacked adequate water. Nonetheless, the Punjab governor insisted on this location, and by the middle of December 1982, the US Embassy reported that the land had been leveled, wells had been dug, home lots had been laid out, and plans completed for the installation of dispensaries, schools, mosques, shopping areas, and, in the longer term, geodesic dome housing. Despite the ambitious plans, first arrivals were to be issued only tents, quilts, kerosene stoves, and food rations, and they were to have no amenities other than water. [redacted]

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For Islamabad, the overriding positive result of the transfer of the refugees is the relief that it affords the NWFP, where land available for refugee settlement is fast disappearing and pressures on the fragile environment--notably on forest and water resources--are mounting. The refugees sheltered in the official camps, representing about one in every seven persons in the province, have nearly saturated the physical resources of the area. The tens of thousands of unregistered refugees not in camps and the few thousand a month still trickling into the area from Afghanistan--who comprise the population to be resettled in the Punjab--compound the problem. [redacted]

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Punjabi Concerns: Ethnic Conflict and Job Competition

We believe that social and economic pressures that the refugee transfer will create are clearly of concern to Punjabi authorities, even though they are reluctant to acknowledge possible problems and want the camps in their province to be showpieces.

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By settling refugees in the Punjab, Islamabad loses the advantage of the ethnic and linguistic compatibility that now exists between the Afghan and Pakistani Pushtun populations in the NWFP. Although there are some Pushtun-speaking people in the new campsite area, the US Embassy expects possible ethnic confrontations if the refugees leave the immediate areas and compete for jobs with Punjabis. We believe that the Afghan Pushtuns' distinctive cultural and ethnic behavior could also spark conflict. They will not be able to blend easily into the population of Punjabi-speaking areas, which, unlike the immediate border areas where the refugees are now confined, have so far not had to play host to Afghan tribesmen on yearly migration or as seasonal work-seekers. The cultural and tribal setting that has made feasible the reception of the Afghans in the NWFP is absent in Punjab.

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We believe that there is basis to Punjabi rumors, [redacted] that Afghans will displace locals in an already tight job market. Refugees in the NWFP have already become a force in the labor market there, according to local officials. They are employed in large numbers on construction sites, on roadbuilding crews, and with local transportation companies. In Baluchistan the government has attempted to isolate refugee camps from local job markets in an effort to address local Baluchi fear of becoming a minority in their own province. Despite these efforts, the streets of Quetta are crowded with Afghans (local officials estimate some 100,000 are resident) and, although periodically rounded up by authorities and sent back to the camps, they quickly return.

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[redacted] the establishment of the camps in Punjab is likely to be perceived by Pakistanis as a government move toward de facto assimilation that will eventually result in a permanent Afghan presence. We believe that complaints about the refugees may become widespread and vehement. Even now newspaper editorials voice

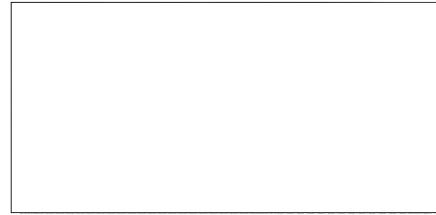
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concern that Afghans overcrowd public facilities such as hospitals and bazaars, that they contribute to inflation and lower local living standards, and that they receive free food, shelter, and medical care even though they are employed in the local economy. [redacted]

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Refugee Concerns: A Hostile Environment

The refugees' uncertain future will be further undercut, in our opinion, as large numbers are moved arbitrarily from Pushtun areas into potentially hostile areas. In our view, the added distance of the new camps from the border and from Peshawar, where the resistance organization headquarters are located, will make the Punjabi sites particularly unpopular with the mujahadeen among the transferred peoples. We do not believe that assurances from Pakistani officials that families will be kept together in the new camps and that every effort will be made to respect ethnic and tribal concerns will overcome the reluctance of the refugees to move. We therefore expect the refugee transfer to the new camps to create morale and adjustment problems for the refugees and control problems for the Pakistani Government. [redacted]

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Outlook.

Our assessment is that popular resentment could be exploited by opposition politicians as the presence of the largely Pushtun refugee burden begins to fall on nontribal people outside the two border provinces. As the politically dominant province in Pakistan, complaints from Punjab about the refugees will be loudly heard in Islamabad and could heighten already major concerns about the eventual outcome of the refugee problem. The government will have difficulty limiting the Afghans to a noneconomic role in Punjab, in our opinion, and conflicts over job competition could present situations easily manipulated into antiregime confrontations. [redacted] 25X1

We believe refugee uncertainties of their future will be reinforced and tensions among them more pronounced as thousands are arbitrarily moved, underlining the full import of their dependence on Pakistani decisions. Although we are sure the Pakistani Government is prepared and able to enforce its will on refugee resettlement, Afghans are a volatile people, well armed and troublesome, and could be a source of serious law and order problems for Pakistan. [redacted]

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